

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

WHAT WAS SO ATTRACTIVE IN ARTEMIS/DIANA WORSHIP, AND
WHAT WAS THE RATIONALE FOR CHRISTIANS
NOT TO FOLLOW PAGAN IDEOLOGY?

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INTRODUCTION

It is important to know the background in which the early Christian Church existed, because it helps to understand what took place and why the biblical authors expressed themselves the way they did. Here we will trace some of the background in which the Ephesian Church existed. The purpose of this paper is to find out more of what was involved in Artemis/Diana worship and why that type of worship was to be avoided by Christians. The context of some of the writings of the Apostle Paul, may help to explain why he expressed himself the way he did, especially in some difficult passages about women that today many readers find hard to understand. The first part of the paper will deal with information about the city of Ephesus, with its temple, what was involved in the Artemis worship, the role of women in the Roman Empire, and mystery religions. The second part of the paper will discuss the main differences between worshipping Artemis and being a Christian in the first century.

THE CITY OF EPHESUS AND THE TEMPLE

The area in present southwestern Turkey, where Ephesus once was located, is not very well known. However, today many resorts exist on the coast and tourists regularly come and see what remains of the old city of Ephesus. One can see a lot of interesting ruins there, but in the first century the Mediterranean city shone as a jewel in the crown of the Roman Empire's wealthiest province (Glahn 2015a: 316). The Romans subdued the Ephesians in 41 B.C. and the city of Ephesus became the capital of the Roman province of Asia with a governor placed there. Due to its strategic position it gained tremendous wealth based on trade via land and the sea and potentially also because of gifts to the temple (Gritz 1991: 12–13). The city had a cosmopolitan environment and hosted a number of religions and philosophies. In the first century, faiths other than Artemis worship existed, including a big Jewish population and also temples dedicated to Rome and Caesar (Gritz 1991: 13–14). Ephesus was the capital of Asia and in a limited sense, Artemis of Ephesus was the natural idol whom all Asia worshiped, as is expressed in Acts 19:27 (Fausset 1984: 171). The

worship of Artemis had an influence, not only within the religious sphere, but was also evident in the city's political, civic, cultural, educational, and economic activities (Oster 1992: 548). Games celebrated at Ephesus in honor of Artemis, and her worship, was the tie politically uniting Ephesus and other cities (Fausett 1984: 171). The influence of an all-powerful female goddess was so strong at Ephesus in the first century that local legends claimed the city itself had been founded by powerful women, the mythical Amazons, a group of dominant women warriors especially devoted to the worship of a mother goddess (Cosaert 2013: 7).

The original temple in Ephesus was founded in 580 B.C. but was burnt down in 356 B.C. The second temple, mentioned in Acts, was built during the reign of Alexander the Great (Fausset: 1984: 171). The legend says that while Artemis was away from the temple assisting at Alexander's birth, her first temple burnt down and since she was away she could not stop the fire (Glahn 2015a: 329). The second temple to Artemis was built in 356 B.C. and known as the Artemisium/Artemision, and drew worshippers from all over the Mediterranean (Cosaert 2013: 7). The religion of Artemis was internationally recognized as a premier religion and her temple was acknowledged as one of the Seven Wonders of antiquity (Oster 1992: 548). The temple was the largest of all Greek temples of that time, with measurements of 70 by 130 meters and 127 columns, each 2 meters in diameter and 20 meters high (Oster 1992: 545). Antipater, the general left in command of Macedonia and Greece after Alexander's death, upon seeing the Artemision for the first time, compared it with the other wonders: "I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labor of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, 'Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught so grand'" (Glahn 2015a: 319). The temple also served as a treasury and bank, since it was thought that a temple ran a low risk of being robbed (Fausset 1984: 171). One of the secrets of the popularity of the temple was its right of asylum, even for runaway slaves. Whatever the fate of the town, the temple and all within the precinct were safe (Woodhouse 1899: 1099; Cranford 1990: 66). Craftsmen did not produce replicas of the present temple but probably an image of an

earlier shrine or less likely an image of the goddess herself. These would be taken home by pilgrims for use as household shrines between visits to the temple (Cranford 1990: 66).

THE BIRTH, BACKGROUND, AND CULT OF ARTEMIS

Tradition placed the birth of Artemis in the woods near Ephesus not far from the mouth of the Cayster River long before the settlement of Ephesus (Cranford 1990: 65). Artemis was the twin sister of Apollo and his birth took nine days. Horror at the pains her mother endured at birth made Artemis adverse to marriage. Artemis had also no desire to give birth herself, so she asked her father to make her immune to Aphrodite's arrows, a request that Zeus granted. Thus Artemis had a special sympathy for women in travail from her first days and came to be associated with virginity and, especially in Ephesus, with midwifery (Glahn 2015a: 319; Wheaton 1980: 123). In this creation narrative, the woman came first, which gave her preeminence as the first twin. Competition persisted between cities that worshiped one or the other of the twins, with Artemis's followers insisting she was superior because she was born first (Glahn 2015b: 463). As we will see more of later, in this religious environment saturated with the "feminine principle" due to the Artemis cult, attitudes of female exaltation or superiority existed. Also, the myths of Cybele and Attis, from which the Ephesian Artemis sprang, emphasized the creation of the goddess first, then her male consort (Gritz: 137–38). The name Artemis, from ἀρτέμειω, means "to be safe and sound." In the first century, Strabo wrote "Artemis has her name from the fact that she makes people 'artemeas' meaning sound, well, or delivered" (Glahn 2015a: 318).

The Carians and the Lelegians worshiped the "Great Mother" during the Late Bronze Age at Ephesus. Cybele and Hecate were among the other goddesses worshiped in the region. With the arrival of the Ionians at Ephesus around 1000 B.C., some scholars argue that aspects of these and other Asiatic traditions came to be associated with the Greek Artemis. As the area came under the control of one kingdom after another, the worship of the mother goddess was assimilated into the religious beliefs of each successive civilization and finally "produced" the Ephesian goddess Artemis (Longman 2013: 122; Cosaert 2013: 7). It is important to notice that the worship of Artemis at Ephesus was not the same as that of

Artemis in the traditional Greek pantheon and some scholars connect her closely with Astarte/Ishtar (Cranford 1990: 65). Artemis was associated with nature, with the undisturbed life of its animals living free from the artificial and unnatural rules constructed by men. Her power was manifest in the world of plants and animals. The Greek Artemis was originally the queen of nature and the nurse of all life; but from first to last the Ephesian goddess was, according to Woodhouse (1899: 1098), an oriental divinity.

The statue of Artemis can be seen in the local museum. Since scholars connect Artemis to the Phoenician Astarte it is thought that the many round forms on her chest are breasts or eggs which should symbolize the generative and nutritive powers of nature (Fausset 1984: 171). So their reasoning goes something like this: The Ephesian Artemis has many breasts; breasts are associated with sex, mothering, and nurturing; thus, Artemis is a mother goddess. And a mother goddess whose body is covered with sexual objects must have also been a sex goddess. Such thinking influenced scholars to think that Paul's first epistle to Timothy was written to counteract the teachings of an ancient fertility cult devoted to Artemis in the city of Ephesus. However, S. L. Glahn (2015a: 322–23) points out that Jerome was the first to identify these appendages as breasts which he associated with nurturing, thus Glahn sees this view as coming from the fourth century and has thus been imposed on the first century Artemis. There is a tension between scholars about how Artemis was viewed in the first century since the perception of her has changed over time. E. M. Blaiklock (2009: 376) informs us that the Amazons, the warrior maids of Asia Minor, are said to have founded the cult of the Ephesian Artemis and writes: "certainly the girls who served the temple were dressed in short skirts with one breast bare, huntress-fashion." Blaiklock (2009: 375) further states that her role as a city goddess was the result of her popularity among women because she was invoked in childbirth. The author also writes that the most probable explanation of Artemis's function as a goddess of birth is that, in spite of her classical virginity, her ultimate origin was one of the many mother goddesses of the prehellenic world. This view is in contrast to others who state that the goddess's cult was not characterized by base sensualism or a focus upon sexuality and fertility (Oster 1992: 548; Glahn 2015b: 450–51). Even if we do not have the full picture of Artemis we know that she appealed to both the social

need and the personal pietism of the pagan Ephesians, and they had also made her the tutelary deity of their city (Oster 1992: 548).

The cult included celebrations of feasts, public festivals, sacrificial banquets, and processions. The events were organized by local city officials, a high priestess, priests, priestesses, and other people who took care of the daily business of the temple (Cosaert 2013: 8). As mentioned above, games were also celebrated at Ephesus in her honor and her worship (Fausset 1984: 171). Cult practices included the procession along the Sacred Way, when her statue, dressed by women devotees, was carried to the temple by night, bathed in light (Longman 2013: 123). The month of Artemision (March–April), dedicated to the goddess, was a time for pilgrimage. It was the greatest of all events and worshippers took part in athletic, dramatic, and musical contests. During the festival there was a processional between the city of Ephesus and the temple of Artemis when temple officials carried gold and silver images of the goddess (Gritz 1991: 41). The rituals suggest that those officiating at the feast (the Kouretes) provided those who took part in the ceremonies with some experience of the sacred or an opportunity to reflect upon the sacred story of Artemis's and Apollo's birth or scaring Hera away from Leto (Rogers 2012: 262).

Artemis's birthday party every spring was an opportunity for the Ephesians to express their patriotism and piety at the same time. In Ephesus the sixth of May was the Fourth of July and Christmas rolled into one general festival, panegyris (Rogers 2012: 7). Music formed an important part of Artemis worship, demonstrating that the cult employed hymn makers and a boy's choir (Gritz 1991: 40). Sacrifices were made primarily with food, libations, and incense, very rarely with animals. One month each year in Ephesus was devoted exclusively to the worship of Artemis (Cranford 1990: 66). Women appealed to Artemis for aid with marriage, childbirth, and child rearing (Longman 2013: 123). Inscriptions have been found mentioning votive offerings that were carried in processions on certain days from the temple, through the Magnesian gate, to the great theatre, and then through the Coressian gate and back to the temple (Fausset 1984: 171). Discoveries have indicated the practice of providing Artemis's statue itself with garments and, as mentioned earlier, at processions the statue was dressed by women devotees (Glahn 2015b: 457; Longman 2013: 123). The worship of Artemis included a variety of methods: including music,

ecstatic and orgiastic dances performed by the priestesses, recitations and chants. Worshipers gave her gifts, both money and material items. Some authors state that magical rites such as coitus with a sacred votary, secured fertility of crops, childbirth, etc. If sexual acts were part of the religious worship they were viewed as sanctified (Gritz 1991: 35, 40–41). C. P. Cosaert (2013: 7) writes that the Artemis of Ephesus was worshiped primarily as a life-giving fertility goddess. Glahn (2015b: 457), however, states that in the past many commentators have assumed that the cult in Ephesus was sex-saturated, with the biblical texts interpreted from that perspective. Nevertheless, Glahn writes that more recent scholarship has suggested the opposite.

With this knowledge of the cult connected to Artemis we will now more closely examine her character. While many point out that Artemis was a virgin, S. H. Gritz (1991: 38–39) and others write that she was not termed a virgin in the sense that she abstained from sexual activities, but rather she remained unmarried and had no male she acknowledged as master. Glahn (2015a: 333), referring to epigraphic sources, states that these points do not provide evidence that people in the first century viewed Artemis as a fertility goddess, a sex goddess, or a mother figure. The evidence seems to suggest that she, without exception, was viewed as a virgin by choice, rejecting marriage and erotic dealings with males and demanding sexual purity from her followers. Glahn (2015b: 450) writes, “while many associate Artemis of Ephesus with extramarital sex, prostitution, and fertility, no evidence suggests that she ever, and certainly not in the first century, had such a connection. In fact, she was celibate. Yet this Artemis was strongly associated with childbirth and midwifery.” Glahn (2015b: 451) further writes, “Those formally participating in her rites appear to have been like her, sexually *inactive*.”

Several authors state that *part* of the Artemis cult, and also some gnostic influences, taught the evil nature of marriage, sexual intercourse and having children. These teachings encouraged sexual incontinence, rejection of marriage, and procreation. In refraining from everything that is part of a marriage, women could reach salvation (Gritz 1991: 143–44). Epigraphic evidence dating from the time of the earliest Christians “reveals that Artemis Ephesia’s followers sometimes described her as ‘savior,’ or one who ‘saves’ or ‘delivers.’” In addition to protecting the city, she was believed to have the power to bring

women safely through childbirth, that most feared of passages. Such ‘saving’ might involve delivering safely” (Glahn 2015b: 451, 469). Abstinence included also abstaining from certain foods (Gritz 1991: 115). The followers of Artemis viewed her as chaste, beautiful, and intelligent. She met the needs of her followers, especially women. Gritz (1991: 41) states that her maternity role as the Mother of all the creatures in the world appealed to people: “The religion of Artemis satisfied one’s soul.” Glahn (2015a: 332) writes, “in summary, the literary evidence suggests no link whatsoever between Artemis of the Ephesians and fertility or mothering. What it does suggest is a strong link to midwifery, to the Amazon women, to virginity, saving, and protection.”

The worship of Artemis as a mother goddess with sex oriented worship seems to be exaggerated, but she was still someone people looked up to and admired. Even if scholars disagree on how the cult of Artemis looked in the first century, the worship of Artemis with its impressive processions, ceremonies, and feasts confirm that the goddess was venerated by the “whole world” as stated in the book of Acts.

MYSTERY RELIGIONS

Scholars count the worship of Artemis as one of the mystery religions. R. E. Rogers (2012: 260) writes that during the first century A.D., the mysteries included sacrifices, reading the entrails of victims, announcements and instructions given to initiates, burning incense, cultic dance, and playing pipe music while libations were poured.

The mystery cults were not characterized by correct beliefs or doctrines. These religions were based on emotions and experiences, as opposed to thought and rational content. The religions were rooted in a cyclical death and rebirth of the deity just as nature died in autumn and came back to life in spring. They did not appeal to the intellect, but to the emotions and imagination. The vagueness of the mysteries made them easily adaptable to the believers. One feature typically found in most mystery religions is a female deity. The authority of the mother goddess rested in the ability to create new beings all the time, as she held the power over life and death. The mystery religions elevated the status of women (Gritz 1991:

32–35). Most of these cults focused on the goddess to a degree that subordinated her male consort. Gritz (1991: 33) summarizes her view in a few concentrated sentences:

Two features of the mystery religions contrasted greatly with each other—asceticism and sensuality. The mysteries made ascetic preparations of all kinds and degrees—fasts, absolute continence, bodily mutilations, uncomfortable pilgrimages to holy places, and public confession. Initiates commonly had to abstain from certain foods. The holy seasons required sexual abstinence even for wives and husbands. On the other hand, extreme sensuality, especially sexual, characterized many of the mysteries. The appeal to the emotions and senses accentuated this tendency. Many mysteries had a religious or sacred marriage ceremony as a part of their worship. This symbolized the most intimate union known to religious experience.

Mystery religions seem to be very adaptable with the possibility of giving followers what they wanted. In a time of the world where we often, rightly, assume that men dominated, it is interesting to note that the female god Artemis, or Diana as the Romans called her, had such an elevated position, that also contributed to changing the view of women.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Before we start comparing the religion surrounding Artemis with Christian values and some of Paul's writings addressing issues connected to women, we need to briefly address the general status of women in those days.

During the first century, war was the primary cause for death, and the pressure on wives to reproduce was great. The pressure came from the emperor and politicians, who wanted to keep armies staffed. Only four out of every hundred men, and fewer women, lived beyond age fifty. Childbirth was the number one killer of women and for the population to remain constant, each woman had to produce an average of five children. Artemis played an enormous role in a culture that depended on marriage and reproduction (Glahn 2015a: 330; Glahn 2015b: 451).

During the Hellenistic period, there was a rapid rate of change in many areas, including society's view of women (Gritz 1991: 15–18). Generally speaking, in the three to four centuries preceding Christ, a gradual liberation of women occurred in the Greco-Roman world (Gritz 1991: 15). The transformation of Rome into an Empire during the time of Caesar Augustus also saw the birth of what has been called “the new Roman woman.” This new picture of a woman spread around the Mediterranean and included legal

changes in Roman law which gave economic protection to women. As the fourth largest city in the Empire, it should be no surprise that this ideology spread to Ephesus. Cosaert (2013: 15–16) writes, “For the first time in Roman history, pivotal legal, political, and social changes gave women an acceptable public persona. These changes resulted in a generation of women whose lifestyles and opportunities varied considerably from the traditional image of the modest Roman women.” Roman women could enjoy much more freedom outside the home compared with previous generations, and wealthy women could come and go as they pleased. Roman women could make choices about their directions in life. Women could now become involved in every aspect of their culture, but no general view of women can be held. Time and geography influenced the social view of women, but factors such as distinctions between rural and urban customs, upper and lower classes and theory as opposed to practice also contributed (Gritz 1991: 15, 18). Cosaert (2013: 16) writes, “not only did these laws give a wife an identity separate from her husband, but it also provided a wife with a new degree of authority and power.” In the Artemision, it was priestesses that served the goddesses. Women took part in cultic meals and processions which provided one of the few occasions where some women had permission to leave the home (Gritz 1991: 35). Glahn (2015b: 469) states that ancient inscriptions from the first century show that women enjoyed great autonomy in Ephesus. Cosaert (2013: 8) adds, “it seems hard not to believe that the worship of a dominant mother-goddess mediated through women priests would not have also had some influence on the perception of the role of women in religious matters in Ephesus.” Jews, on the other hand, did not even entertain the possibility of women speaking in a synagogue service, while women played a very vocal role in the mystery religion of Artemis (Gritz 1991: 13).

WHAT WERE THE MAIN DIFFERENCES IN THE FIRST CENTURY BETWEEN BELONGING TO THE ARTEMIS CULT AND BELONGING TO CHRISTIANITY?

The city of Ephesus, with its cosmopolitan environment, hosted a number of religions and philosophies. The danger for the recently-introduced Christian faith, however, was possible corruption by the cultic beliefs and practices already well established in the metropolis. New converts did not

immediately forget or set aside their former cultic ideas and rituals. The risk for syncretism was great and syncretism had to be avoided; the purity of true doctrine had to be maintained. In light of such a background, Paul's warnings to the Ephesian elders were to be expected (Gritz 1991: 14). The teachings of Paul, including the epistles to Timothy, needed to address two levels: first, to teach how Christians are to behave in order to receive respect from their surroundings, and secondly, to deal with Christianity's view of false teachings (Gritz 1991: 106). Glahn (2015b: 469) writes that numerous words and phrases in 1 Timothy have strong connections with Artemis worship and oppositions to it: "The goddess's influence and its affect on the church in Ephesus may account for why the apostle to the Gentiles would choose to speak the way he did of God as Savior, Christ in the flesh, Christ's humanity, ascetic practices, marriage, wives' autonomy, remarriage, widows, modesty in dress, teaching, Adam, Eve, being deceived, being saved, childbearing, and faithful sayings." Glahn (2015b: 454) also points out that internal evidence shows that the epistle to Timothy (1 Tim 1:3) was intended for recipients who resided in Ephesus and that the presence of the highly-influential cult, led by a virgin, accounts for the emphasis in such works. The last few decades of archaeological research in Ephesus have revealed new insights to the context of Paul's writings (Glahn 2015a: 316–18).

In each area below, before we actually go to some of Paul's writings, we will look at some general differences between the two religions—those following Artemis and those following Christ. Then we will see how some of Paul's writings address these areas.

Views of Different Creation Stories

One area of difference between the two religions deals with creation. The creation story of the Bible shows that God created man and women—both in His image. They were different but complemented each other and they needed each other. Man did not have dominion over women, but woman and man together had dominion over the rest of creation (Gritz 1991: 55). God formed Adam first, then Eve. With the birth of Artemis and Apollo, Artemis was born first, "created" first. The myths of Cybele and Attis from which the Ephesian Artemis sprang, also emphasized the creation of the goddess first, then her male

consort (Gritz 1991: 137–38). The Gentiles’s creation narrative where the woman came first gave her preeminence as the first twin. Competition persisted between cities that worshiped one or the other of the twins, with Artemis’s followers insisting she was superior because she was born first. Therefore, in Paul’s and Timothy’s context, the creation story from Genesis contrasts completely with the local story and would have served as a logical corrective (Glahn 2015b: 463). When Paul writes, “for Adam was formed first, then Eve,” (1 Tim 2:13) he is addressing a view of creation that was the opposite of the beliefs of the Artemis cult. What Paul builds on in that statement will be addressed further below. “With Artemis glorified as the giver of life and knowledge, it would not be too surprising if former devotees overturned the Genesis accounts and similarly glorified Eve. Later gnostics did this. 1 Tim 2:13–14 refutes such an argument. Eve was not the paradigmatic revealer of truth to mankind” (Gritz 1991: 140).

The view of creation, how one came into being, is very fundamental and affects the way one views the world, which of course has an influence on relationships between men and women.

Women’s Relations to Men and the Area of Wives Relating to Their Husbands

In a religious environment saturated with the “feminine principle” due to the Artemis cult, attitudes of female exaltation or superiority existed. As stated earlier, the biblical creation story was a truth that certainly deflated ideas of female superiority (Gritz 1991: 137–38). A Christian whose loyalty had recently shifted from following Artemis to following Jesus as the Jewish Messiah would have faced an adjustment in going from a female-dominated cult to a more male dominated one (Glahn 2015b: 468). In Greek culture, the husband had almost complete power over the wife and misused his position. With the movement of the new Roman women and many scholars seeing a dominance of women over men in Ephesus, Paul tries in several passages to redefine marriage to include the kind of sacrificing spirit that Christ showed. Marriage is total self giving and self sacrificing rather than exercising authority, rule, and dominance. Both husbands and wives needed a new way of treating each other. This positive emphasis on marriage in Paulin writings may reflect a criticism of the Cybele-Artemis tradition. Paul’s stress on self-giving, total love, and respect contradicts a merely sexual, mercantile, or utilitarian concept of marriage.

Marriage does not center on fertility and childbearing. Gritz (1991: 91) concludes that “the Christian church protects and esteems women much more that did the Artemis cult.”

Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11–12 seems to instruct women to be submissive and prohibits women to teach or exercise authority over a man. Glahn (2015b: 459) states, “elsewhere whenever Paul used γυνή with forms of the word ‘submit,’ the women he spoke of were wives (Eph. 5:21–22, 24; Col. 3:18; 1 Cor. 14:34). The combination is similarly limited in 1 Peter 3:1. This suggests that Paul spoke of married women in 1 Timothy 2:11 also.” Gritz (1991: 135, 140) points out that teaching in the first century entailed exercising authority over others. Most likely, some women/wives in the female-dominated Artemis culture had an attitude of disregarding their marriage and lording over their husbands. This was probably fueled by the ideas of Artemis followers who forbade marriage. In such a setting, Paul had to teach women/wives to behave correctly in relationship to their husbands in the setting of religious meetings. It is not wrong to believe that some wives exalted their Christian freedom and denigrated their husbands in public. Gritz (1991: 140) states that Paul has interest in Eve’s deception (1 Tim 2:14) because it illustrates the current problem among the Ephesian believers. Wives who did not submit to sound doctrine, but to unorthodox notions and instructed their husbands in public, remind one of Eve’s behavior. Paul wants to break a similar pattern in Ephesus. Paul therefore stressed that women who deceived men should not teach in the church. If one views Paul’s writings about women as apologetic against false teachings in Ephesus instead of an continually-relevant prohibition against females being involved in spiritual content, that creates less problems in relation to other passages, since women during all of biblical history have been involved in spiritual leadership (Glahn 2015b: 463).

Clothing and Appearance

With the freedom of the Roman woman and the dominating female cult in Ephesus where clothing was a gift to the goddess, a female convert to Christianity probably had to adjust in areas of dress and appearance. Paul’s writings in 1 Tim 2:9–10 about women’s clothing and hair, deals with the differences between pagan and Christian women. Scholars are divided as to the reason why Paul included this in his

epistle. Scholars agree that some women dressed indecently and those scholars who hold the view that Artemis worship included sexual aspects, expect Paul to address the issue in order for women to avoid sensuous clothing and not display their body in Christian settings. In the past, many commentators have assumed that the cult in Ephesus was sex saturated, and therefore interpreted the biblical texts from that perspective, but more recent scholarship has suggested the opposite. Glahn thinks it is unfortunate that scholars see references to sex in verses of the biblical text where probably none was intended. 1 Timothy 2:9 may be one such text. When Paul talks about being “modest” he may have in mind that in a church where Jews, Gentiles, females, slaves, and free worshiped together, women should be modest in clothing, instead of signaling wealth. Indications of rank had no place in the congregation where everyone should be equal. That may explain why he recommends women not to wear pearls (which were very expensive in those days), gold, and costly garments (Glahn 2015b: 456–57).

Emotions and Religion

Pagan religions, and in this case the Artemis cult, were built on emotions, including fear, and experience. By contrast, there would naturally be a difference in being a Christian with a loving God and acts built on love and rational behavior. These differences would profoundly impact worshippers. When members converted, there was the risk of misunderstanding these differences. Gritz (1991: 116) writes that most probably, some of the converts to Christianity had been cultic priestesses. One clear difference between the practitioners of the Artemis cult and a Christian congregation had to do with pagan religion’s greed for money and use of religion for financial gain. When Paul mentions that some were led away by various impulses or lusts (2 Tim 3:6) he may have in mind the emotionalism and experience orientation of the mystery cult with its nonrational behavior.

Different Views of Childbirth

Becoming a Christian also changed how a woman viewed childbirth. Refusing to make offerings to the goddess of midwifery, as a statement of her faith, likely would have caused a wife great anxiety, as the prospect of death would have terrified her. The good news was that rejecting Artemis would not condemn

women to death in childbirth. Someone turning from the goddess of midwifery was not going to die in childbirth when turning to Jesus Christ (Glahn 2015b: 465–68). Converts from the mystery religions had to abandon those behaviors and appearances that clouded their witness as believers in Jesus Christ (Gritz 1991: 93). With Artemis as the protective goddess of women giving birth, it is therefore not surprising that Paul in 1 Timothy 2:15 addresses the topic. What is surprising and challenging for many, who do not have the Artemis cult in mind, is the way he does it as he writes, “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” Most scholars agree that Paul’s intention is not to state that women can be saved by having children since he is so clear in other passages that only Christ can save a person. Further, if Paul had in mind that a woman could be saved by childbearing, why would Paul then recommend women in 1 Corinthians 7:8–9 to remain unmarried (Glahn 2015b: 465)? The most logical explanation is that Paul writes to people who earlier had been trusting Artemis when children were born, and also to people who believed that remaining unmarried and abstaining from sex were connected to salvation. He thus stresses that a woman can still be saved even if she now trusts Jesus as her savior and is not living an ascetic life.

Who Is the Savior?

As mentioned before, epigraphic evidence reveals that followers of the Ephesian Artemis sometimes described her as “savior,” or one who “saves” or “delivers.” When Paul in 1 Timothy several times talks about God as Savior (1:1, 2:3, 2:4 etc.), it can be understood in a general way of speaking about Christ. But considering the frequency with which the epigraphic literary sources refer to “Artemis Savior,” perhaps the texts of the Bible hint as to the source and the kind of falsehood causing concern (Glahn 2015b: 453). Paul had to teach the converts that neither ascetic continence, sacred intercourse, nor any other cultic activity could provide them with salvation or eternal life. True salvation came from grace through faith not from works (Gritz 1991: 43).

Marriage, Sexuality, Having Children, and the View of the Body

One side of the cult of Artemis, and the rising gnostic influence, stressed ascetic behavior in connection to veneration of a virgin, which included abstaining from marriage, sexuality, and having children and also abstaining from certain kinds of food. Since this was viewed differently compared with the general understanding of Christianity, a convert also had to adapt to an understanding where God has given the body to be nurtured and to view sexuality and the family as God's gift to men and women. The idea that ascetic women could reach salvation by refraining from everything that is a part of marriage, of course, denied women what had been given them in creation. Therefore, we can expect teachings in the epistles that go against the traditions of the cult of Artemis and Gnosticism. This is what we find in 1 Tim 2:15—Paul states that a woman who gives birth to children is not excluded from salvation. Childbirth did not endanger their own salvation (Gritz 1991: 143–44).

CONCLUSION

The beautiful architecture, the size, and the richness of the temple of Ephesus made a deep impression on both the people at Ephesus and the many visitors to the ancient city. The worship of Artemis with its impressive processions, ceremonies, and feasts further added to the picture that the goddess was venerated by the “whole world” as stated in the book of Acts.

The story of Artemis's birth and her life as a virgin, and managing life on her own without a husband, was unique when women for centuries had been totally dependent on men in society and marriage. With the freedom of the Roman woman, Artemis became someone to look up to and to admire. The worship of her satisfied the deep longings of the soul. The worship of her as a mother goddess with sex-oriented worship seems to be exaggerated. Some recent scholarship, based on archaeological findings, supports the view that this was not a practice in the first century when the Christian Church developed.

Artemis, who was a twin born before her brother Apollo, was thus viewed as created first. Since the legend of Artemis relates that she became adverse towards marriage and having children of her own, she came to represent a goddess who cared for, and in a special way understood the needs of women. The

Artemis of Ephesus, came to be seen as a savior for women and a goddess to turn to when delivering children. Whereas the Christian religion built its foundation on the real Creator and His love for His creatures, the religion of Artemis built on legends impressed on the adherent's emotions, a religion partially built on fear of death in childbirth.

With the understanding that Artemis was created first and the connection to a strong feminine environment with females serving in the temple, it was easy for some portion of the women in the church to behave in various improper ways. This behavior had partly to do with dress and appearance, perhaps avoiding sending sensual signals, but perhaps also to dress modestly, not sending signals of rank in society when equality was the rule in the church. It partly also included improper attitudes of women towards men and their husbands in various events and teaching sessions in the Church.

Since the religion of Artemis, like other pagan religions, was built on emotions and impressions, new converts had to learn to build a relationship to God and their fellow believers based on love and sound doctrine. They also needed to understand that Christ, not Artemis, was the Savior. Since their Savior also was their Creator, Christ had given marriage, sexuality, family, and children as gifts to be enjoyed, not to abstain from or feared as obstacles to salvation, as the ascetic side of Artemesian religion taught. Finally women giving birth needed to learn that they could still be saved if they bore children, and that Christ could answer their prayers of help while giving birth.

It is far easier and more understandable to read the writings of Paul as an apology against the false teachings in Ephesus in connection to Artemis worship, rather than being general Christian instructions. It explains some of his statements regarding women and takes away the misunderstanding that he writes to women in general, when actually in some texts he most probably addressed wives, and in other texts women, who earlier had been followers of Artemis of Ephesus.

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